

# Parenting Under Pressure



Core, Strength-Based Strategies  
for Responding Instead of Reacting to  
Your Kids During Times of Stress

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# **The Strength-Based Approach**

Strength-based practice is an emerging approach to raising kids that is exceptionally positive and inspiring. Its focus is on strength-building rather than flaw-fixing. What your children do right vs. what they do wrong.

It begins with the belief that all young people have or can develop strengths and use past successes to curb problem behavior and enhance functioning.

# Positive Emotions/Feelings and The Brain

Positive emotions flood our brains with dopamine and serotonin, chemicals that not only make us feel good, but dial up the learning centers of our brains to higher levels. (Testing and “3” example)

Positive emotions help humans to organize new information, keep that information in the brain longer, and retrieve it faster later on. And they enable us to make and sustain more neural connections, which allows us to think more quickly and creatively, become more skilled at complex analysis and problem solving, and see and invent new ways of doing things.

"Brain change, once thought impossible, is now a well-known fact, one that is supported by some of the most rigorous and cutting-edge research in neuroscience."

(Achor, The Happiness Advantage, P. 29)

**Attitude**

**&**

**Actions**

“One adult who thinks I’m  
terrific!”





“Self-doubt kills ability.” - Degas

...and self-doubt often leads to anger, anxiety and defiance...behavior is always a message: Help me!



Little changes can ripple  
into Big solutions





## Connecting Statements

*“Hey, this isn’t me against you. We’re on the same side. I don’t like hassling you to do your schoolwork. But what would you do if you were me? I love you. I believe in you and know that you are going to do great things in this world. But school IS your ticket to a great life.*

How about we lighten the load? Just get one or two sections done? There’s a lot going on now...And I’ll help you some.”

Strategic use on incentives...

Key principle = celebrate improvement!



Billy Dollars!



Learning is my ticket  
to a great life!





“What’s a mistake?”

“An opportunity to take!”

The Harder I try, The Higher I fly!



Be the Eagle!

# Jordan on Character and Grit

"I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career.

I've lost almost 300 games

26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot ... and missed.

I've failed over and over and over again in my life. That is why I succeed."

~ Michael Jordan



# Mindset

Dweck: Fixed vs. Growth mindset

Encourage effort vs. end result

Resist labeling kids: smart, the best...

or

Rude, manipulative, resistant, lazy, etc.”



“For twenty years, my research has shown that the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects that way you lead your life.”

Carol Dweck (2006) *Mindset*.

# Decoding Problem Behavior

## Pejorative Label

## Positive, Hope-Based Reframe

Obnoxious

Good at pushing people away

Rude, Arrogant

Good at affecting people, expressive

Resistant

Cautious

Lazy, Un-invested

Good at preventing further hurts, failures

Manipulative

Good at getting needs met

Just Looking for Attention

Good at caring about yourself

Close-mouthed

Loyal to family or friends

Different, Odd

Under-Appreciated

Stubborn & Defiant

Good at standing up for yourself

Tantrum, Fit, Outburst

Big Message

Learning Disability

Roadblocks

If you lose...



Don't get the blues!

If you don't win  
...Just grin!!!



**If it's Stinkin'**



**Change the Thinkin'!**

**SB Principle: Big problems don't always require big efforts for solutions**

Cues

## **One-Line Raps**

Coping Thoughts

**Produce catchy mantras that can create neuro-pathways**

The brain is designed to change in response to patterned, repetitive stimulation.

**Key: Use Rhythm, Repetition, Rhyming, and Humor**

**Proven winners:**

!

**“NBD...easier than one, two, three!”**

**“When you're mad, don't do bad, just talk or walk...talk or walk.”**

**“Let it go, So!” “Let it go, Joe!” “Make a list, it will assist!”**

**“I'm smart, it's in my heart!” “Don't quit, take it bit by bit.”**

**“If it is to be, it's up to me.”**

Stop and think!  
Don't be a dink!

Stop and think!  
Don't be a dink!

Stop and listen!  
Cause you don't know what  
you're missing!

If you talk in an  
angry tone...

....you'll live  
alone!



# Hope is Humanity's Fuel



James Garbarino:

Postulates that *terminal thinking* – the inability to articulate one's future may be a clue to why some children succeed while others fail.

# Positive Predicting

How are we going to celebrate when this ends and we get back to our normal life?”

What’s the first restaurant we go to when this is over?

“What are you going to be when you grow up?”

“Tell me your top 3 colleges you’d like to attend?”

“How should we celebrate when you/we...”

When you talk about the future in truly positive terms...you make any desired outcome more possible. And when it’s more possible, it becomes more probable!

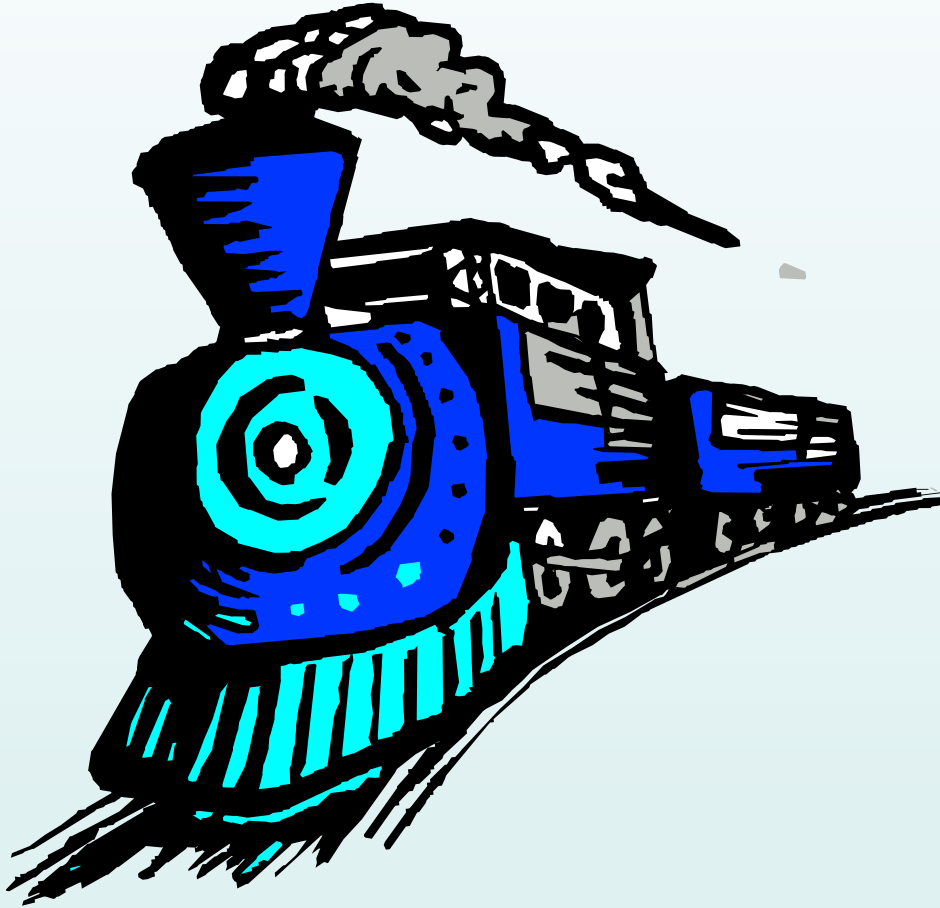
# Positive Predicting



Who should be call in two minutes to give them the big news...

**THAT YOU CAN NOW RIDE A BIKE!!!!!!**

# The Train



“You’re a big, strong, powerful train. But, right now, you’re off track. We’ve got to help you get yourself back on the rails.”

# Future Oriented Questions

1. Do you think you'll attend college nearby or far away?
2. What do you want to be when you grow up...what kind of job?
3. Do you think you'll travel a lot when you're older? Where?
4. Want a big or small family?
5. Would you prefer to live in a big city or small town?
6. What kind of hobbies will you have when you're older?
7. Will you be generous and give your time and money to those in need?

# The Observing Ego

“I’m REALLY ticked...I could just - it’s okay. Stay cool...ALL feelings are normal. Learn from this. I’m suffering a bad self-esteem injury, but in a little while it will heal. *Respond* instead of *React*.  
*Use the Force, Betty!*  
*...I mean, Luke.*”



Respond =  
The Golden Rule  
& role modeling

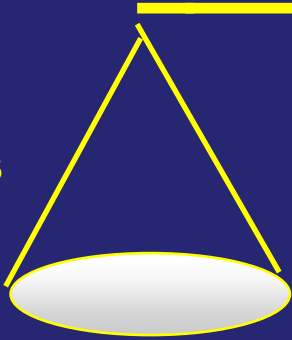
Think: Wants & Needs



# The Affect Scale

Out of control

child's anger



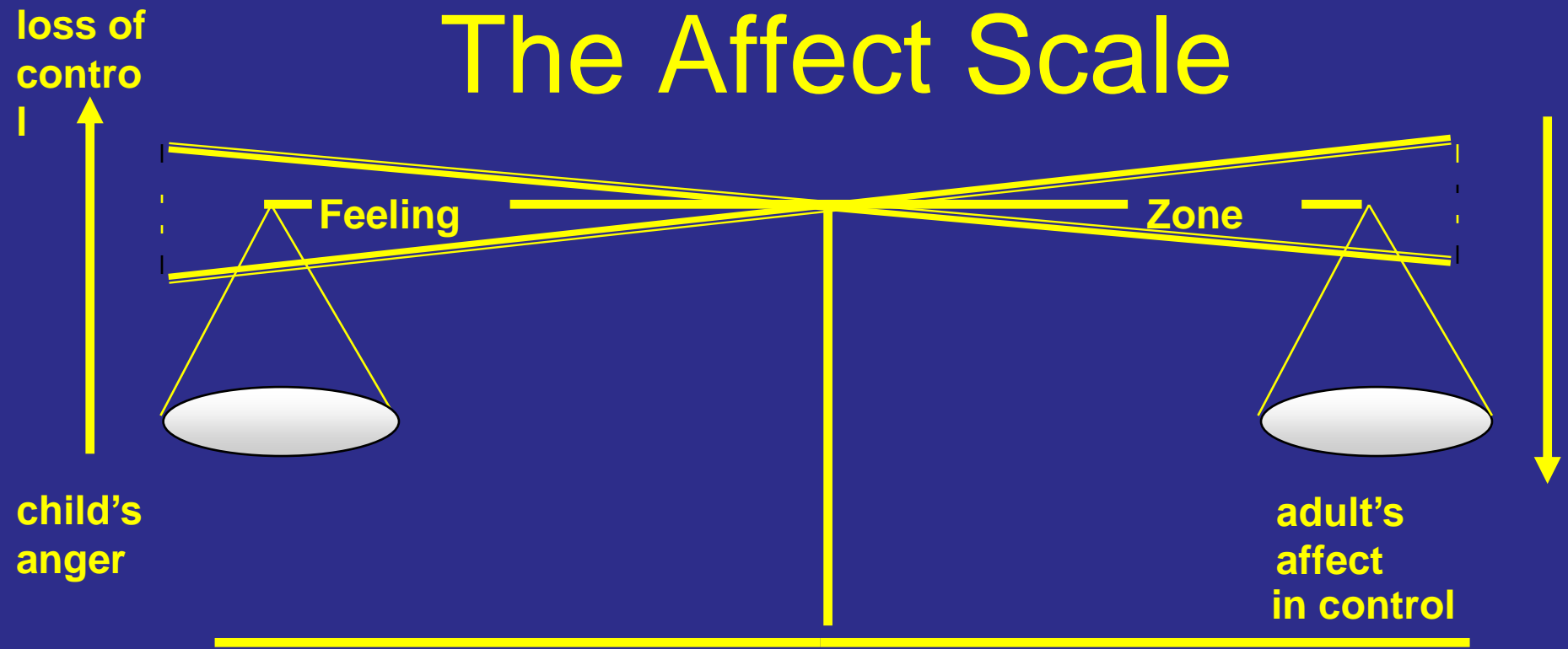
adult's affect

In control

**Key: Establish inverse relationship**

*As they get louder, you become more quiet*

# The Affect Scale



Inside the “feeling zone” there is room to model affect-laden content.

Said in a controlled, but somewhat expressive manner:

“John, I’m really upset about the choice you just made.”

“Mary, I’m angry about that...”

**Key:** If the child escalates through the zone, the adult’s affect should grow more muted.

# Content vs. Message



“You won’t be around next week?”

*2 weeks later...*



“*You*...won’t be around next week.”

Use “I” or “We” instead of “You,”  
and start requests with “Please”  
and finish with “Thank you.”

# Body Messages



“C’mon dude...let’s get it done, and then we can boogey. NBD brother.”

VS.

**NBD = No Big Deal!**

“You need to get it done now.”



Responding vs. Reacting means you use *consequences* instead of *punishment* when it comes to discipline

Consequences are related to the behavior in question, punishment isn't. Consequences reinforce values

Question: What is the most important thing a parent should be thinking about prior to setting a limit with a kid or group?

*The Sanctity of the Relationship*

(Rules without Relationship = Rebellion)

**Logical consequences:**

Breaks (time-out), redoing, proximity manipulation, grounding, reparation, directed chat, restrictions

# The Observing Ego

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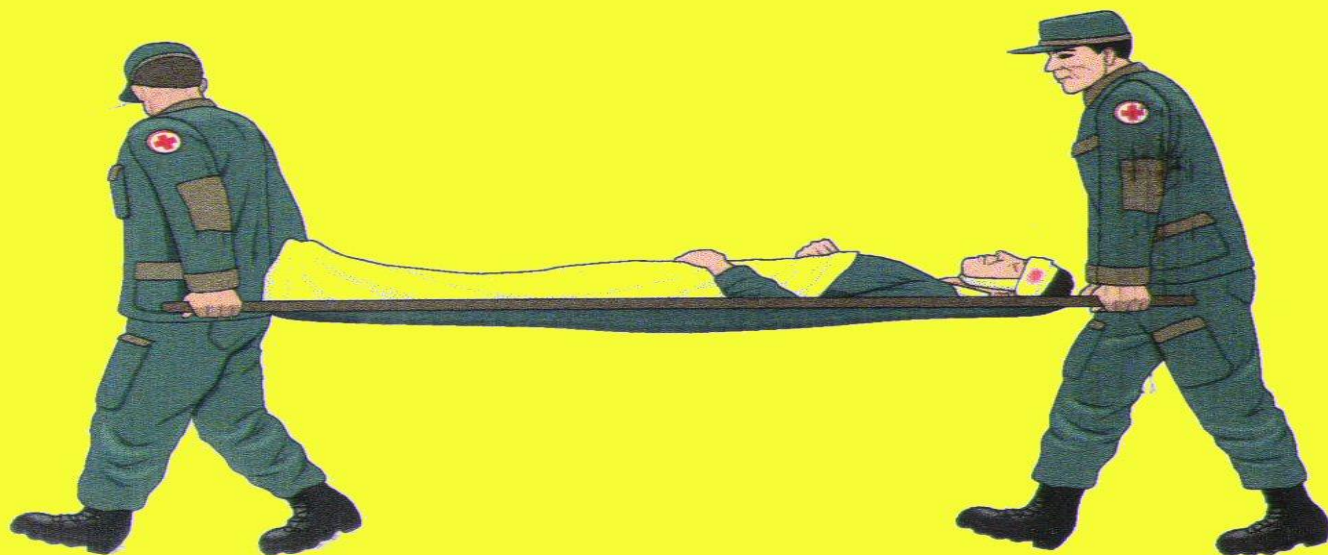
1. Think about the principle: Lack of support = punitive actions  
Think: *I can do anything for 2 more hours..*
2. Visualize going to bed feeling content
3. Think about tomorrow, next wk, etc.
4. Think M.A.S.H.
5. Use the Force, Luke!



Respond =  
The Golden Rule  
& role modeling



# M.A.S.H





# The Eco Map

Rate Your Level of Support



# Coping Techniques for Anxiety: Kids

- Take time to talk to your kids about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way your child or teen can understand.
- Reassure your kids that they are safe. Let them know it is okay if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn to cope from you.
- Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand or misinterpret.
- Create routines, establish structure in your homes. The night before, or each morning, have a family meeting and review and plan the day ahead (routines, fun activities, schoolwork, chores/responsibilities, etc.) Empower the kids to be part of this process. Post this info on the frig.
- Everyone moves, exercises! Spend time with them!
- Kids and adults who struggle with anxiety are helped by doing breathing exercises and learning relaxation and self-regulation strategies. Pursue this. Tip: Google **Zones of Regulation**

# Coping Techniques for Anxiety: Parents

- Anxiety results from the brain misperceiving and exaggerating the risk in a situation and making individuals feel they need to avoid in order to survive. This is the key to being a *worry-wise person*, not taking worry's version of the story as an accurate reflection of the situation.
- People struggling with anxiety need to challenge their anxious thoughts and understanding of situations, rather than accepting anxious thoughts at the truth. People need to replace their unrealistic and exaggerated thoughts and avoid stinkin' thinkin'.

**Solution-focused question:** Have I or other people experienced what I'm now going through and worked it through? How's they do it?

Are there people right now dealing with this in a more calm, rationale way? If yes, why? What are they doing/thinking to get them through this? Why can't I?

- **Exercise regularly; practice visualization** – sit comfortably, maybe play soothing music and remember places you've been in detail and recall with all of your senses the look, feel, smell, tastes and sounds; **learn breathing techniques, practice gratitude!** – it makes you feel good to recognize someone has been good to you. This can be spiritual as well, **actively connect** with friends and relatives!

# Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the ability to exist in the present moment and practicing it often looks like meditation.

## Exercises:

Assume a comfortable position, close your eyes. Take three slow, deep breaths...Then repeat: Breath in...breath out...Release the stress...Let it out!

Become a statue. Assume a fixed position. You can blink and breathe.  
**Learn to be someone who doesn't react. Learn to block it out.** Think about a situation that's bothering you and let it go.

Helpful self-talk: Slow down. Stay in the moment. Don't be in a hurry to worry.

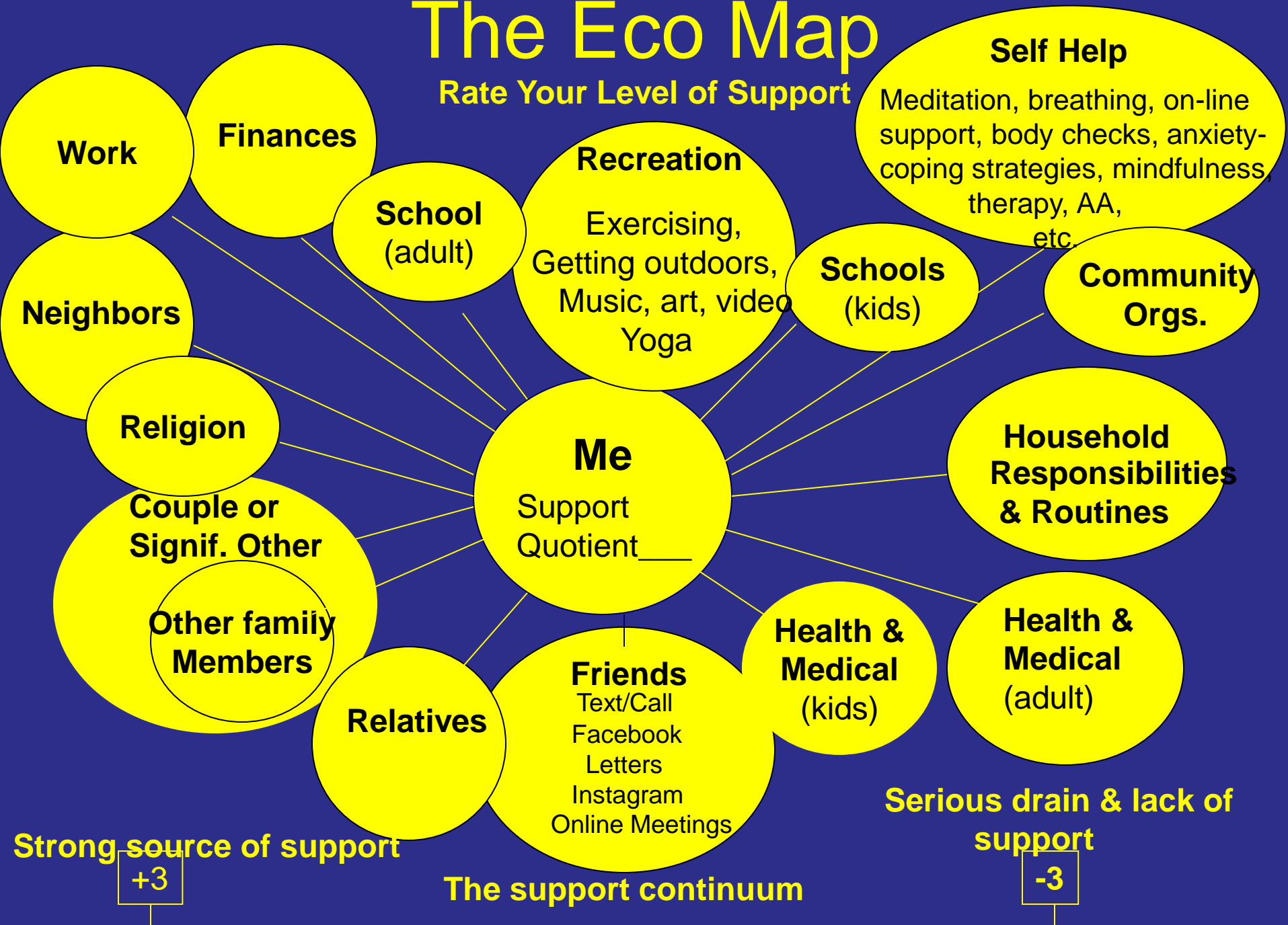
Answer these questions:

Where are you now? Here, in the present

What time is it where you are? Now

# The Eco Map

Rate Your Level of Support



# Strength-Based Parenting

➤ Emphasis is on:

*Strength-building* rather than flaw-fixing

*Doing* rather than understanding

# Activities & Self-Esteem Building

Put kids in a position to succeed. Encourage, provide and seek out tasks and activities that offer **Universal Opportunities for Success.**

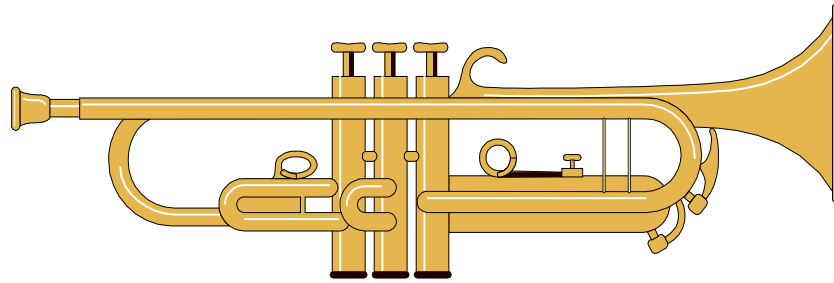
*Every kid needs his/her niche. Explore and encourage existing strengths/talents*

- Games: board, video, bingo, Simon Says, chess, checkers, etc.
- Karaoke & music: in-home concerts, kazoo bands, shows, instruments, music videos, lip-syncing, etc.)
- House records: longest dice roll without getting doubles, longest domino chain, highest stack of playing cards, etc.
- Volunteer: delivering food, helping neighbors & relatives safely, etc.
- Sports: If safe - hiking, biking, martial arts, roller-skating, soccer, etc.)
- Fitness: create fitness charts for jogging, jumping jacks, sit-ups, etc., build obstacle course, yoga, meditation, walking, etc.

Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods* cites “childrens’ disconnection from nature” as a major reason kids with mental health issues are often over-medicated. Get them outside!

- Hobbies (art, music, crafts, video games, pottery, word search, magic, reading, photography, etc.)
- Animals (pets, guinea pigs, cats & dogs, fish tanks, etc.)
- Home repair jobs (painting, landscaping, reorganizing, rearing, etc.)



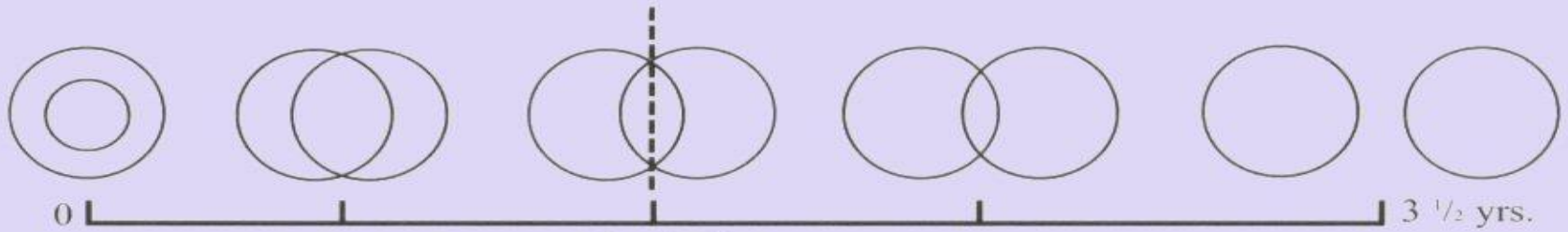


# Trumpet Success

Keep scrapbooks, hang pictures, call  
friends and relatives w/good news!  
Use social media (judiciously)

# The Holding Environment

TASK: "good enough parenting"



Sociopathic

Borderline  
"Terrible Twos"  
Separation-Individuation

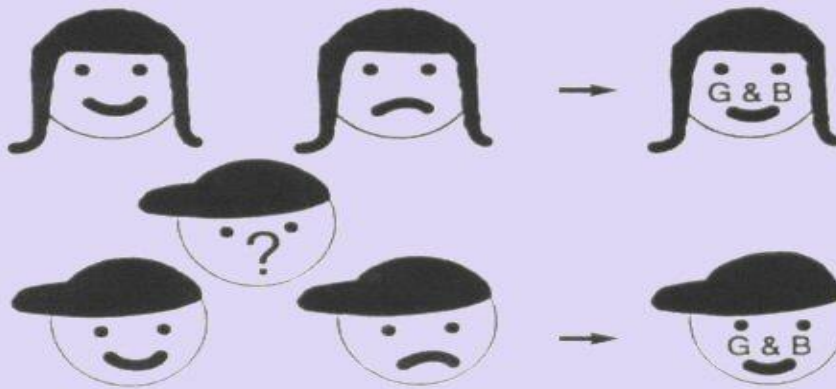
SPLITTING MECHANISM  
Good mother/Bad mother

OBJECT  
CONSTANCY  
cohesive self  
sense of self

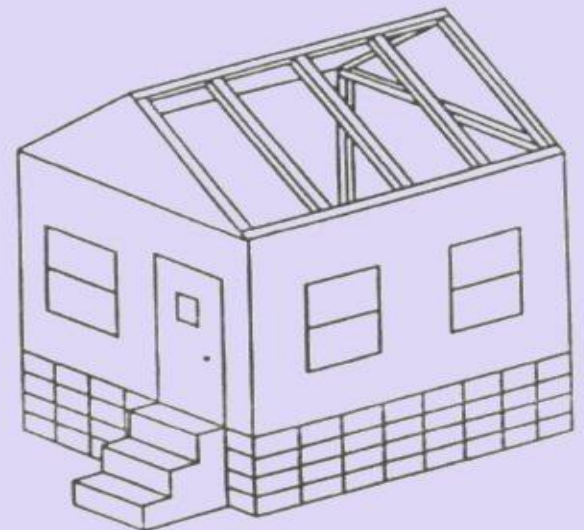


Social Accommodation  
Social Subordination

TASK:  
merge the good  
and bad introjects



Foundation



FILLERS VS. TALKERS

# Behavior Management: Understanding, Prevention, and Principles

View misbehavior as a message: “*Something is wrong. I need help.*” Try to *respond* instead of *react* to difficult behaviors.

Practice *pattern identification*. Note if a child or group act out in a predictable manner (i.e. at the same time each day, over the same issues, etc.). Once a pattern is identified, investigate your (or the setting’s) role in contributing to the problem(s). What can you change, modify or practice? How can you make the environment more *user-friendly*? Next, seek out the child’s input.

Use *consequences* instead of punishment. A consequence is *related* to an inappropriate behavior, a punishment is not.

In general, the *sooner* a consequence follows a misbehavior the more effective it will be.

Issue consequences that have a *high probability* of being accepted.

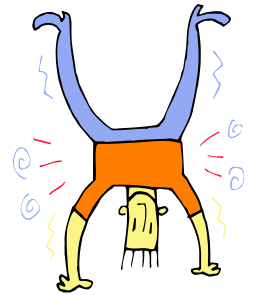
Establish a limit setting progression. In other words, be clear what occurs if a child refuses to accept a limit.

Consequences should fit the child, not the crime! Every young child is different. What works with one, might not be effective for another.

# Limit Setting

**Limit setting progresses in five clearly defined stages:**

<b>First:</b>	<b>Supportive</b>
<b>Second:</b>	<b>Logical Consequences</b>
<b>Third:</b>	<b>Physical Intervention</b>
<b>Fourth:</b>	<b>Processing</b>
<b>Five:</b>	<b>Reintegration</b>

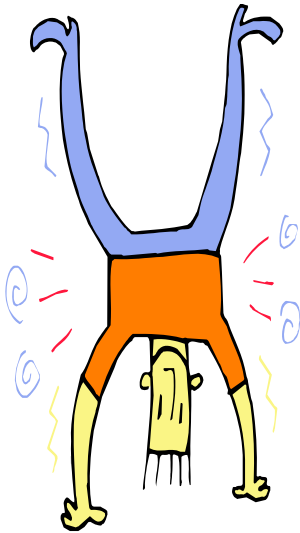


Distraction

**After 2 or 3 Supportive Interventions in a short time period, it's often wise to issue a logical consequence**

**First Stage: Supportive Interventions include but are not limited to:**

- Verbal prompts, reminders, warnings
- Redirection, distraction, divide & conquering
- Appropriate verbal dialogue (e.g. compromise, negotiate, etc.)
- reframe, support and help, explore historically)
- Humor
- Non-verbal interventions (e.g. hand signals, lights out, circulating around the room, etc.)
- Use the power of a group
- Channel (e.g. have an energetic kid do something physical)
- Hold an impromptu meeting
- Vicarious reinforcement (praise another youth for the behavior you want the youth in question to display.)



# Logical Consequences & the Message They Send

## Proximity Manipulation (keeping them close)

*Make improper choices and we need to watch you more closely.*

## Re-Doing

*We know you can do or say that in a better way. You have before.*

## Natural

*Because of your decision to do \_\_\_\_\_, I'm not comfortable\_\_\_\_\_.*

## Directed-Chat

*Let's find a quiet place to work this through.*

## Loss of Privileges

*You didn't handle this like you normally do. Let's take some time to figure out how you can succeed at this when you go or try this again.*

## Reparation

*We all make mistakes. Sometimes we have the opportunity to repair or make-up for what we have done.*

Breaks (chill-out, take some space, take a break, take a walk, etc.)

*A short break away from me or the group should help you to think about better ways of expressing yourself and calm you down.*

## Grounding

*Given what you did, we've temporarily lost our trust in you. We'd like you to stay in and earn it back.*

# Being Proactive: The Art of Preventing Troublesome Behavior

Factors that positively influence behavior:

- Parents and professionals truly understand their kids from a number of perspectives including: psychological, developmental, social, neurological, and physical, etc. In other words: ASSESS well and create USER-FRIENDLY environments that are in sync with the needs of the children and youth.
- The youth are properly supervised. There is a system in place for making sure the adults are properly situated to observe.
- The environment is clean and orderly.
- Humor is taken seriously!
- Rules and logical consequences are clear, practiced, enforced, and have been mutually developed. (And there aren't too many!)
- Parents have their children practice the desired behaviors (i.e. Use Pre-correction)